

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, May 5, 1895, with transcript

letter from Dr. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell. 1331 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D. C. May 5th, 1895. My darling May:

Here start good resolutions in re letter writing to my dear little wife. My thoughts are always going towards you, telegrams pretty often, but letters!

I find Charlie is in the same box with myself. He dictates his correspondence and accordingly hardly ever writes a letter in his own handwriting, but there is one person, (and about only one) to whom he cannot send a typewritten letter, his wife:

Well here I am all alone in my desolate study, with paper in front of me, a pen in my hand, a cigar in my mouth, and my thoughts far away on the Atlantic, what shall I do?

A voice, remarkably like yours by the bye, whispers in my ear the one word "SCRIBBLE". All write — no "right" — what shall I scribble? Whatever you're thinking about, replies a meteor well now — let me see — what am I thinking about? I am wondering whether the Iowa storm will succeed in catching you upon the Atlantic, Before allowing you to sail I examined the weather reports, and found threatening conditions in the North-west, but no actual storm, The North-western "Low" had sent down a spur or "trough" of low pressure in western part of Mississippi valley and "Old Prof" remarked that such an arrangement of isobars was entirely favorable to the development of local storms in territory covered by trough. Saturday evening papers show that "Old Prof." had probabilities on his side. A fearful Tornado appeared in Iowa, wiping out several small towns and villages. The little children of a school, were carried on up into the air, and deposited 2 in the tops of trees etc., or dashed to the ground a quarter of a mile away, dead. Some 40 or 50 lives lost, trees, houses, everything in the path of the Tornado, completely demolished, excepting

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Tornado-proof cellars. A Tornado is only a local storm, not likely to affect you. The Cyclone however, about whose edge the Tornado hover , s , will follow you across the Atlantic, at about the rate of 25 miles an hour, or about 600 miles per day.

At this rate it would travel eastwards with a little northing 3600 miles in six days, by which time if it has not overtaken you, you should have reached your port. Just touch and go, think you have had sufficient start to get clear, not sure, but then again, many things may happen to storm in six days. It may die away before it reached the coast or soon after, and so you may escape it altogether, or it may gather energy and chase you all the way across, and as it will move east-wards faster than you do, nearly twice as fast in fact, it may overtake you before you get to the other side, and then you will catch it because you will be moving in the same direction with the storm center, and cannot escape except by lying to, or slowing down, to let it get ahead, (neither of which things will Captains of ocean going steamers f s o if they can avoid it.)

Upon the whole I think you will escape, but I shall watch weather bulletins with anxiety, until storm has reached Atlantic and passed beyond our Ken. Yesterday, after waving our last adieus (no “au-revoirs”) to you all, we disposed of carriages as follows:— Mr. Lyon and Mrs. Kennan took the coupe, and Augusta, Lena, Mr. Westervelt and I took carriage. Left Augusta and Lena at their boarding place, and Mr. Westervelt went to Gilsey House with me. Shortly after one o'clock, Mr. Robert A. Pinkerton appeared accompanied by Mr. George L. Bangs “General Superintendent of Pinkerton's National Detective Agency, 66 e E xchange Street, New York.”

I suppose it's the duty of detectives to deceive people concerning 3 their personal appearance, and certainly neither of these gentlemen impressed me with the detective idea at all. They didn't seem to have a detective flavor about them!. Mr. Bangs especially was a very gentlemanly man, quite refined looking, courteous, polished, polite, a decidedly handsome man, with dark hair and beard, and “liquid” dark eyes. Looked too nice and gentlemanly a man to be engaged in tracing criminals. Mr. Pinkerton had more of the

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detective about him, but he did not impress me as a smart man, on the contrary, rather slow and heavy. He read aloud the letters received concerning the man Washburne, but read them with difficulty, stammering over some parts like a school boy. There was nothing difficult about them, good business hands, all of them, would have expected a good detective to have read them like a flash.

Have telegraphed Mr. McCurdy to send to the Pinkerton's all information in his possession concerning Washburne. The Pinkerton's will see some of the people who have written to me, and have them swear out a warrant for the arrest of the man, and will then arrest him, if they can, notify me to come on and confront him. They expect to be able to arrest him in a day or two, so that whole matter may be disposed of before I go on to Baddeck.

This morning (Sunday) another letter received from "Wise and Miller" Jewelers, 332 Fifth Avenue, showing that only yesterday, while we were in New York, the man was approaching people as my agent for the investment of capital! I telegraphed Wise and Miller at once, and asked them to communicate with the Pinkerton agency, also telegraphed Mr. Bangs, giving address of Wise and Miller. Should not be surprised by a telegram at any moment to the effect that the Washburne swindler had been caught. The Pinkerton's intended yesterday to insert a decoy Advertisement in the Herald, must buy a copy, and see if I can identify it.

Had a visit this morning from Mr. Goodfellow, formerly of the 4 Coast Survey. Last year number of persons in Coast Survey cut down, and Mr. Goodfellow was thrown out of employment at a moments notice, after 45 years service, an outrage. I should think that his term of service alone, should have entitled him to some consideration, if not indeed to a pension. Even a private employer or corporation would have felt under some obligation to give an old and tried employee some notice of dismissal, so as to have given him time to look round and find new employment.

(Sunday night, May 5th, 1895)

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A bulky letter arrived here this morning for Elsie, bearing the post mark of Cambridge, showing, I suppose, that Elias had not forgotten her after all. I forward it with this. A letter for Daisy also arrived at the same time from Cambridge, but in a different handwriting, from which I conclude that there are other faithful cousins located in that part of the world.

Unfortunately, special delivery stamps don't work on the Atlantic,, and I am afraid that I would be ruined financially, were I to open the letters and cable the contents! Besides, perhaps, there may be some things, in these letters that the writers might not care to be cabled at any expense, and so, well, they must go by regular mail, and if you forget to inquire for mail matter at Munroe and Co's before you are bound to go there for financial reasons, the delay will not rest upon my shoulders.

This afternoon I drove out to Kendall Green to see Mr. Dobyus the Supt. of the Miss Inst. at Jackson, Miss.

Took him out for a drive, showed him Volta Bureau, took him into my Father's for a moment, then drove him to Twin Oaks, where a bevy of fair damsels fairly rushed into my arms, with demands for full details of the sailing of the Burgoyne. Then Grace came and wanted to know whether you had broken down. She perfectly expected you to have a good cry, at parting. I told her how brave you all were, as you smiled adieu, But I didn't tell her that I knew, the cry, would come after all friends had departed! You poor little girl isn't that true?

I feel so worried about you all, that I have half a mind to start by the next steamer. I told Grace of your indignation when you discovered, among the beautiful flowers, a card with the name of Mrs. "Charles J" Bell, and how it was sometime before you could be assured that you were not receiving her "leavings", but were receiving flowers for your own self, from her.

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To-night's weather predictions show that the western storm won't go anywhere near you, so I will say. BON VOYAGE — A pleasant visit to sunny France, and a safe return to,

Your loving husband, Alec. Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell, c/o Munroe & Co, 7 Rue Scribe, Paris, France. P. S. How do you like this scribble? If it doesn't read properly in the morning, won't send it. Second thoughts are best, won't read it at all, will seal it up now, so that I may not be tempted to deposit it in the waste basket, which stands on the floor in enticing proximity. Poor Elsie, I am sorry she didn't get her letter before sailing, Daisy is made of sterner stuff, and won't grieve so much over the silence of — Hope Elsie won't adopt the usual woman's plan of scolding her correspondent for an uncommitted offence, and then repent in tears the hard words she had used. Considering the suddenness with which you adopted your plans and 6 put them into execution. I don't see how a letter from Elias could have come any sooner. Love to Ellie and Day, and my dear little May, on the deep blue say, From A. G. Bay.